



The Way You Are

L.J. Mile

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By the time he reaches college, Robert is an expert at hiding his feelings—with a few side effects. If he has a little attraction towards boys now and again, he can bury it with a candy bar and go on living the life his parents want for him. But he never expected to meet someone who'd like him just as he was, flaws and all. Now his emotional armor has stopped working and he'll be forced to decide which life he wants for himself; a difficult choice when both paths involve loss and love.

The Way You Are Details

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From Reader Review The Way You Are for online ebook

Vfields Don't touch my happy! says

I do love reading about characters who are different or have uncommon challenges in the m/m world. So this was a plus. I was thrilled by the way LJ Miles voiced Roberts reasons and anxieties around eating and food. The entire time I was reading I worried readers won't give this one a chance or judge Robert or worse Pete for not demanding a diet or else. The ending worked for me if for no other reason than Mile chose not to try to solve every problem by the end. Even in fiction life isn't that easy.

Kaje Harper says

It's always nice to have a main character who isn't model-perfect, especially one who is significantly overweight. Robert has been overeating for a long time - food providing both a comfort, and the means to an armor. If he's too fat to appeal to most girls, there's no need for Robert to explain why he's not dating one. Pleasing his homophobic parents and keeping their love is easier when he is the fat guy no girl (or guy) would want.

This technique has worked until Robert gets to college and meets Pete, his roommate. Pete is gay and out, and he's not at all repulsed by Robert's weight. So will college be the moment Robert turns his life around to something that he really wants? Or will it be the place he eats himself out of pants and shirt, trying not to be too gay for his family to love?

I appreciated the ending of this, and the avoidance of some cliches. I did take off a star for being a bit black-and-white in its characters, and for the degree to which over-eating was presented as a pathological response to stress. But the relationship parts felt realistic and sweet, with enough angsty moments to give it some depth. I enjoyed the story, and will probably reread this someday.

Rohit says

While I appreciated the tenderness with which the author has tried to breach body positivity, it still felt a bit more formulaic than actual care for characters. I would have loved to see Robert's weight and overeating being one of his tics and not the only one, like a bit more development on the characters.

Karen BookAddict says

trop de clichés et à tous les points de vue...

Otterpuss says

Well this was different.

Robert has had an ultra conservative upbringing and uses food to try and mask his misery at the realisation he's gay and that would never be accepted by his parents.

Pete is unashamed, cute, sweet and a little too good to be true.

The author really made me think in regards to Robert's relationship with food. His anxieties, struggles and reasons were really well written.

This is a sweet story and it's very different from most romance stories. It's steps away from the 'flawed but incredibly beautiful' norm. I loved that the author stayed true to the characters and didn't have Robert losing weight. It was interesting and different enough to keep me hooked.

jules0623 says

3.5 stars. It was really hard to read this story because I saw so much of myself in the MC. I found myself cringing at the similarities then bursting into tears because I know exactly how it feels to look in the mirror and see the results of that kind of 'comfort'.

Elsa Bravante says

La belleza está en el interior, bla, bla, y todos estamos de acuerdo. El mensaje es muy bonito, y cierto, además de darle un poco de frescor a esa ristra interminable de personajes con cuerpos y caras perfectos. Pero, la descripción de cómo un MC come sin parar como solución a sus frustraciones y su ansiedad, se hace muy cansino a las 437632829 vez que se nos cuenta, de verdad. Ellos son adorables, la historia es bonita, pero la autora vuelve una y otra vez a lo mismo, y al final se ha tornado un poco aburrido y le ha quitado toda la emotividad.

Psé, entre 2 y 3.

Rachel says

lovely :)

Ulysses Dietz says

Family makes all the difference. Conditional love, on the other hand, might not be worth the sacrifice. Robert is a big guy. But he's a big guy because he's been eating to mask his true feelings and fears since he was thirteen. Pete, by contrast, is a skinny guy with bright red hair and freckles all over his body. He and Robert are put together as freshman in college, and thus begins Robert's journey to self-discovery.

This is a fairly simple story of young love, but it is also a fairly ringing indictment of our society's habit of judging and only granting approval if one conforms to society's norms. Robert is the way he is because his

parents' love and respect is conditional upon his achieving what they want him to achieve. He has buried his true self under candy bars and snack cakes. Blind to what they've done to their child, his parents also judge him for being too heavy.

Pete's family doesn't judge; they merely love. Their main concern is for others' health and happiness, not society's standards. It's a torturous road, but Robert has to walk it if he is ever to be truly happy, truly his own man.

The gay world is also pretty harsh about folks whose bodies don't conform to the received notions of form and beauty. This is not a book where the protagonist becomes gorgeous and muscular in order to win love; this is about controlling an eating disorder and finding pride inside oneself. The love he seeks is unconditional, which is, after all the only love that matters.

Jane (PS) says

So sweet - more emotive than I expected; MC Robert had major issues to address. A great book to make you realise that you are valued no matter what society in general reflects back at you.

Valerie ✶M/M Romance Junkie✶ says

I have no idea how to rate this. This is definitely not the norm. A book about non-model perfect MCs?!? What??? Did I enjoy it? Yes, but I have issues. Things in this book were completely black and white with no shades of gray. Pete and his family were perfect and accepting of the boys being gay AND with Robbie's weight. Robbie's parents were evil, fat shaming, religious bigots. I think that was just too... Too much? I think the story could have still had the same impact concerning non-perfect MCs without the melodrama of Robbie's parents added on top of Robbie's own issues concerning his sexuality and, in turn, his self medicating with food. I do think that the food issues were dealt with a somewhat simplified manner. As an emotional eater (as an adult), I don't think I have ever consciously thought about WHY I was eating at the time that it's happening. I'm pretty sure that as a teenager, I wouldn't have even been self aware enough to even know that's what I was doing. So having Robbie thinking about eating away the pain or nervousness didn't ring true IMO.

All in all, an enjoyable but OTT read. I would definitely read more by this author. I'm going with 3.5 rounded down for Robbie's parents.

Jennifer says

I am ALL here for the overweight male MC and this story was super sweet. There are some things I'm not quite sure about plot-wise, but overall I liked it. Side note: I swear I read this same, EXACT story on an online forum years ago (don't ask).

Also, this is a Kindle-only read. I understand why, but I hate e-reading.

Maria says

Hot damn, would you please take a look at that cover?! Two guys and no perfect six pack in sight! Revolution!

Seriously though, I wanted to have this the moment I laid eyes on it. Because c'mon! When was the last time you've seen an overweight character on a romance book that didn't include the fat, unhappy guy going on a revolutionary diet, loosing 200 pounds and THEN finding their HEA? I'm almost tempted to say never. Also, don't let the cheerful, light cover fool you. This is not a low-angst, happy-go-lucky book, and the things the MCs are dealing with are not your standard college guys/experimentation/coming out MM recipe. Sometimes it seems like a different cake altogether.

In this book, we get to meet Robert who, at the tender age of 13, realized that he's gay but can't be due to his very oppressive, conservative family. His coping mechanism became eating. His weight became his armor. If no one wants to touch him, there is no reason for him to think or talk about attraction at all. Nobody wants him, so he doesn't have to face wanting someone in return. Which works out for him until he meets his new roommate at college. Out and proud Pete is pretty and smart, and (unfortunately) attracted to Robert from the get-go. What to do when the life you carefully constructed around yourself suddenly doesn't fit anymore?

There are several things that could have gone wrong with this, but made me happy when they didn't. Start with Pete. His attraction to Robert could have gone downhill fast if it would have been portrayed as some kind of kink. Too often fat-shaming occurs in the context of "No normal person would love you, only the very kinky ones with a serious fetish." So I was very happy with Pete being attracted to Robert for various reasons, and while he does have a thing for "big guys", he never made me cringe or shudder for making Robert (or me) feel dirty in any way. It was not attraction DESPITE the weight, nor was it BECAUSE OF it. Kudos to the author for finding the perfect way and tone here.

Secondly, I was afraid that somehow the story would have an undertone of... pity, maybe? Or at least the notion that overweight people are all struggling with some internal crisis and that binge-eating is their way of dealing. It could have been one of those stories where overeating was the only reason for the weight of the MC, and the overeating was the only reason for the MC to have problems in the first place, and so on and on. I didn't feel that way at all here. There is no denying that overeating was one of Roberts coping mechanisms and his armor. But. That was not all of it. His weight was not his "main problem", nor would he become magically thin and trim and fit as soon as he started to deal with his issues. He's a big guy, he will always be a big guy. But he can be a healthy, sport-y, happy big guys. His overeating is a problem, binge-eating sweets until he's physically ill is a problem. But it's not all it is, and not once did I have the feeling that it was somehow meant as a generalization à la "All overweight people eat too much because they have mental problems." Kudos. Seriously. All the kudos!

Also, how awesome was it for Robert to find love without changing his complete lifestyle, loose 200 pounds, start running marathons and becoming a sports model?! I have no words for how happy I this made me. Because hot damn.

The only thing I struggled with a little were Roberts parents, or better say the black-and-white feel of the families. Where Pete's family was absolutely 100% awesome on all levels, Robert's parents were somewhat cartoonish, evil Bible-thumpers incapable of loving their son the way he was, or even acknowledging him as

a real person. I don't think they once looked at Robert and actually SAW him. So that was a little disappointing for me, a little too clichéd for my taste. But honestly? In the grand scheme of things, it didn't take away from my enjoyment that much. Minor blip on a bigger radar, so to say.

This was a strong debut all around, and a very courageous one at that. The writing might not have been flawless or perfect, but I honestly didn't give a crap anymore at one point, because I just liked the story too much.

V says

If you've read my previous comments I'm not very fond of Ya stories
This couple is very young, but they behaved very sensible and charming, hence I kept reading.
What a beautiful, heartbroken, lovely story.
It makes me realize of how many times I saw an obese person on the street thinking, why they don't lose weight? I need to apologize and start thinking the real reason behind it.
I want to thank the author for giving this wonderful book for free..
The ending was so nice, for me, it was perfect!

Shanu says

Hmm... I do feel this deserves maybe 2/5 stars but lately, I've been either loving a book or dismissing it completely, with little to no gray zone.
Anyway, the book. It had a real interesting premise : it deals with homophobia and fatphobia and it still manages to look sweet.

I can't help but feel that for such a short story, there's was no need to add the eating disorder in regards to Rob's obesity. Especially since it was poorly done : every time Rob ate anything, as a reader I felt as if the author was shouting in my face that he was eating because HE WASN'T PROPERLY COPING WITH HIS EMOTIONS AND FOOD WAS A SUBSTITUTION FOR COMFORT AND PEACE. Every. Single. Time. It got obnoxious and unnecessary (I'm too lazy to put quotes in here, but really it was redundant).

I had a love hate relationship with the other character Pete : he was cute and jovial at first, but then turned into someone manipulative in some aspects, very demanding, and condescending to Rob when things didn't go his way.

In short, I wasn't convinced by this love story, and the brought up issues weren't handled properly in such a short book.
